

**NEWS-  
LETTER  
NO. 135  
OCTOBER  
2015**

## **Henley Archaeological & Historical Group**

**Chairman's Report.** It is only a short time since our last Newsletter so my first thought was that there was very little to report, however there are important issues. When I first accepted the position of Chairman I said I would serve for a year, that is nearly upon us and if there are no strong objections I will carry on- health etc providing, BUT Ruth has been Acting Secretary this year and really wants to step down and despite appeals nobody has come forward. Graham has asked for help with the Web Site, again no volunteer. How will we manage without these positions being filled, so please think about it and remember that being involved keeps the brain active and keeps away that horrible word beginning with 'A'

The Memories of WW2 for the Journal are tricking in and those we have are diverse and really interesting. I am keeping my fingers crossed that on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> there will be more to come. A paragraph will do and a photograph will be great. We hope this will give all of you the chance to make a contribution and we won't mind if you tell us you need just a little more time as long as it comes in our direction. I notice that other organisations are coming up with ideas to collect memories and it will be really great if we produce a journal of real historical value.

The visit to the Houses of Parliament went very smoothly and Ruth has been busy doing historic walks around Bix and keeping a close eye on planning applications. Graham investigated the prospect of a PA system as some people complain that if the speaker is quiet they cannot hear at the back of the room and then to our delight the Town Council informed Graham they were going to purchase the equipment so it should be in place for our first lecture.

As promised Highlands Farm archaeological surveys started in August so the new buildings will avoid any areas which show signs as being of special interest.

Don't expect to get drunk and riotous on October the 6<sup>th</sup> but it will be good to hear all about such goings on and I look forward to seeing you in the Barn all eager for the 2015- 2016 sessions.

Pam

### **Lecture Season begins again in October 2015**

- |                                |                     |  |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>6<sup>th</sup> October</b>  | <b>Shaun Morley</b> | 'Drunk and Riotous – Oxford's Friendly Societies'              |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> November</b> | <b>Gary Lock</b>    | 'Excavations at Marcham, Oxon – a big Roman and Iron Age Site' |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> December</b> | <b>AGM</b>          | followed by refreshments and brief Members' Contributions.     |

All lectures are held at 7.45 p.m. in the old 'Kings Arms' Barn;  
Entry from Kings Road Car Park. All welcome, members free, non-members £ 3

Please, remember that **membership renewals will be due at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.**  
Single annual membership: £ 12 Family annual membership: £ 20  
Please make cheques out to: Henley Archaeological Group

### **'The Copper King' Thomas Williams of Llanidon**

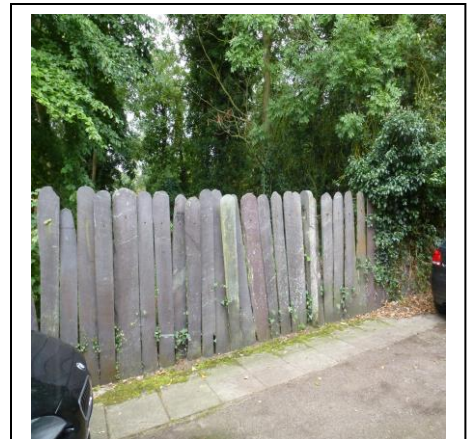
During a recent walk along the Thames from Hurley to Temple a long fence made entirely of tall, Welsh slate slabs was discovered along the foot path, separating it from a property which may have been, or may be still is, part of land belonging to Temple House. This had been acquired by Thomas Williams in c. 1790 when he mentions his 'new mansion of Temple House' in a letter of 1791 to his business partner Boulton.

Looking a little further into the ownership of the site so well fenced by the long distance travelled Welsh slates, it transpired that the water mill at Temple had from the latter part of the C18<sup>th</sup> been part of the copper works at Marlow, which belonged to the Welsh copper king. Temple Mills were described in 1806 as 'some of the most complete and powerful of the kind in the Kingdom'. They were engaged in rolling copper sheets and bolts for the navy 'pans and tanks for distillers'. 'Water power and the vital London Trade outweighing the distance of copper supplies' ! These copper supplies would have come from Anglesey, where most of Th. Williams' business interests lay ( J.R. Harris *The Copper King*)

Questions springing to mind are why and how bring copper to Marlow to be processed ?

Surely there is water power to be had nearer to London, unless this was the shortest distance from Anglesey via the Kennet & Avon Canal ? However, we learned during our outing to Devizes three years ago that the canal was only fully operational in 1810, that is when the long flight of 16 pound locks was finally ready to connect both parts of the canal. Until then all goods had to be pulled up the long, steep slope by horse drawn trams. It seems inconceivable that it was economical to transport the raw materials with so much manhandling, so was there another way?

The tall fence slates must have travelled the same way from their native Wales as the copper to stand guard next to the foot path close to the Thames, but there is no documentary evidence as to when this might have happened, very probably after 1810 when Welsh roof slates began to make a serious impact on the local roof scapes too where they are used for new builds as well as changed, old roof now accommodating wider, shallower roofs giving more head height, usually only to the front elevation. There are many examples in Henley of these, just to mention two: No 25 Market Place and 51-53 Friday Street



If anybody has information on the Copper King, his Marlow copper mill, his house and slate fence at Temple near Marlow please share it with us.

Ruth Gibson

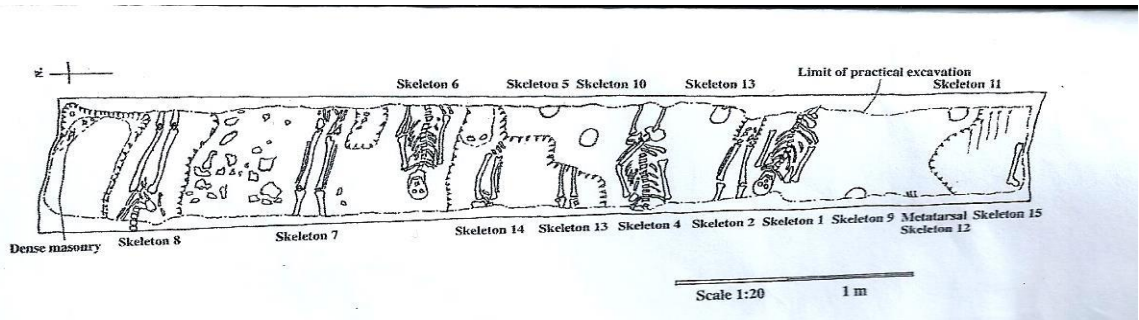
## WALKS TO BIX BOTTOM IN SEARCH OF THE ‘LOST CHURCHES’ OF BIX

Some thirty HA&HG members, including a few guests, walked from Bix Common down to Bix Bottom in search of the medieval churches of St. James’s and St. Michael’s this summer.

Bix is a large, dispersed parish and the two manorial lords of **Bix Brand** and **Bix Gibwyn** had a church each built along the valley bottom road, once the king’s highway, now a dead end leading only as far as the nature reserve and then continuing as a foot path.

Both churches were eventually abandoned as the population first dwindled and then moved towards the newly improved toll road on higher ground in the late C18<sup>th</sup>. Whilst St. James’s of Bix Brand survived until it was replaced by the newly built and consecrated church next to Bix Common Field in 1875, St. Michael’s was completely lost, only vaguely remembered in a field name called ‘little Chapel’ located in a bend of the road and shown on the 1725 Stonor Estate map. Thanks to recent archaeological investigations by SOAG encouraged and supervised by the Victoria County History team during the research for their Volume XVI on Henley and surrounding parishes (published 2011), part of the churchyard of St. Michael’s was re-discovered in the back garden of Keeper’s Cottage, Bix Bottom. This is one of two modern houses (replacing Broads Cottages of Victorian date, which stood much nearer the road than the present 1970s houses). The church probably stood in the centre of its grave yard, where the modern houses are. Rumours of human bones and a well located during the foundation work circulated at that time, but were not followed up.

One long trench excavated in 2009/10 showed some 16 skeletons, all laid out facing east and



without grave goods, clearly Christian burials. Dates obtained from bone samples showed that this churchyard was used from the C12<sup>th</sup> to circa 1600; very much the period for which there is documentary evidence of St. Michael’s church being in use.

The narrow window on the left is one of only two early Norman windows, all other windows having been altered and enlarged over time.





Above are pictures of the medieval St James's Church ruin after repairs and consolidation of its flint walls and stone arches in 2014/15.

This small church is a rare example of a two-cell C12<sup>th</sup> church consisting only of chancel and nave. Its Norman arch survives in the narrow round headed opening between the two cells, one belonging to the priest, the other to the congregation. Two small Norman windows are the only original opening of the Norman church. The larger windows as well as the niches in the dividing wall are later additions.

Because the Victorians built a new church in 1875 at Bix Common the medieval one never underwent the large-scale Victorian alterations and additions seen in virtually every village church today. Such a pity the roof was taken off, or most of this modest church would still be there today and we would be able to find out what a medieval roof frame looked like! (Something as you all probably know only too well I am very keen on !!) However, flint walls need weather protection or the mortar gets washed out. The new protection is 'sedum' a dense form of small, low growing plants sown on a water proof membrane.



Using live plants is apparently a very traditional roof covering in Scandinavian countries. During a recent Ramblers walking holiday in Norway we saw many on timber houses, old farmsteads and modern holiday homes, as well as this dry stone built shepherd's hut (left). Right is the sketch by Elizabeth Toms, (HA&HG and Rambler member) of a small farmhouse, now a holiday home, with a healthy 'meadow' on top. We never did find out whether it needs cutting and if so how it is done?

Ruth Gibson

## VISIT TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

On 3rd August 2015, 30 members of the HAHG enjoyed a visit to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. They joined official guided tours starting at about 11 a.m. and lasting around 90 minutes. Besides the Lords Chamber and Commons Chamber, the tour visited less-familiar areas, including the Queen's Robing Room, the Royal Gallery, lobbies and St Stephen's Hall, before finishing in Westminster Hall.

Although parts of the buildings date back to the 11th century, most of the visible architecture is later than the fire of 1834. Following a public competition to design the new Palace, the entry by Charles, later Sir Charles, Barry was chosen. Barry was assisted in this design by Pugin, who was

even more influential during the later construction phase. Earlier parts of the buildings include St Stephens Hall, formerly the chapel of St Stephen where the House of Commons sat before the destructive fire occurred, although the design of the 19th century building was much changed. The earliest existing part of the complex is Westminster Hall, which fortunately escaped the fire, and which features a 14th century hammer-beam roof and even some of the earlier stonework.

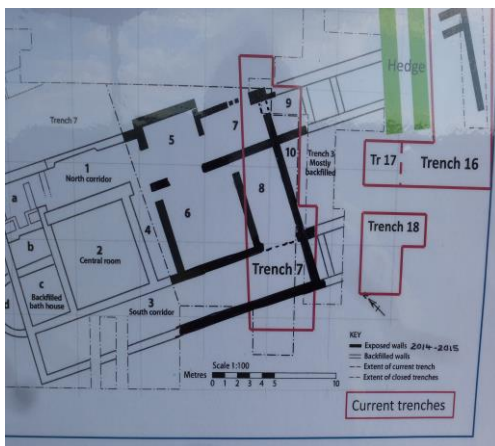
A number of the group made independent visits to the 14<sup>th</sup> century Jewel Tower, formerly a part of the mediaeval Palace of Westminster, but now apart from the present-day complex. The Tower originally housed precious items belonging to the king and now contains an exhibition of less-precious, but still fascinating, items and replicas illustrating the history and role of the building.

Tony Lynch

## Report on Open Day Sunday 27.9.15 at SOAG's dig near Goring: Gatehampton Roman Villa

Another summer of excavations has produced more evidence of a much larger building, or was it a sequence of re-buildings, replacing a smaller farmhouse with a more substantial dwelling as prosperity allowed with painted plasterwork walls and tesserae floors.

More pottery, painted wall plaster and small implements such as bone pins and the whetstone Viv discovered were among the interesting finds this year. Also a pile of broken roof tiles has been interpreted as a possible recycling workshop to make tesserae, as the red floor ones excavated are of fired clay – and what better second hand source than to cut up your old or surplus flat roof tiles? Amazing *'what the Romans have done for us'!*



Left: Plan of excavations  
Above: whetstone

Mike Green explaining the site

The excavations continue on Sundays until the end of October. Anyone can have a go.

## EVENT IN HENLEY LIBRARY - Ask the Archivist

What promises to be a very interesting event with staff from the Oxfordshire History Centre is taking place at Henley Library on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October between 10 am and 12.30 pm. Expert staff will be there to answer your questions on archives, local studies material, and an introduction on digital and online resources for family and local history should prove very useful for those of us, who are not too familiar with this type of modern research.

## WEBSITES

The websites maintained by the Group are:

[www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk](http://www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk). In addition to news and information about lectures and visits, our website provides a facility for storing documents and making them readily available to view on members' computers, tablets and even mobile phones. All Journals published by the Group are available through the "*Journal*" menu item and other documents, including several building research documents written by Ruth Gibson, are available through the "*Articles*" menu item. All members are asked to register and sign in when visiting the website which will allow access to private pages, which include Committee meeting minutes and the latest issue of the Journal.

[www.henleycensus.info](http://www.henleycensus.info) a searchable database containing the census records 1841 – 1901 for Henley and Rotherfield Greys parishes. A project was started a year ago add the returns from the 1911 census. This was taken on 2<sup>nd</sup> April covering the same area as the 1901 Henley census. For the first time the schedules completed by householders were not copied into books, but have been retained together with summaries prepared by the enumerator. The returns included additional data about the duration of marriages and the number of children born alive and the number surviving. Occupation data was extended to include the industry or service in which a person worked and birth place data extended to include nationality. Occupation and birth place data were numerically coded by census clerks in coloured ink on the original return. Good quality images are available in colour so that these codes are clear. The codes have been transcribed and included in the database providing a significant increase in expected accuracy of the transcripts. As of October 2015, the summaries for all districts have been loaded to the database. The returns for districts 1 and 9 have also been added and are currently being checked against the householders' hand written returns. This project is dragging on, mainly due to the disappointing lack of support from members. We welcome help with checking; if you are able to do so, please [email](#).

[www.henleyprobate.org.uk](http://www.henleyprobate.org.uk) a searchable database containing C18<sup>th</sup> wills of residents of Henley and the immediate area. A project was considered to add the wills previously transcribed by the Burford Group as part of the Victoria County History project for Henley, but not readily available. This project was found to be feasible, but cannot proceed until resources become available.

These websites provide a valuable resource for family and local historians and offer members an opportunity to research topics of interest to them. The websites also provide members a free and easy means of publishing the results of their research and sharing them with other members. Any member seeking assistance to use this facility should, in the first instance, [email](#) the webmaster.

Graham Jones

### **Very Urgent Message to all Members**

Please, do come forward and join the Committee. We really need you, as several members who have served and worked hard to offer a wide ranging and interesting programme of information, talks and outings on all matters historical, architectural and archaeological, would very much wish to stand down to spend all their decreasing energy on pursuing their own research. Anyway, new ideas and fresh energy are what is needed urgently!

Please, see the application form at the back of this Newsletter and hand it to any Committee member, or speak to any of us and do not to worry about the formality of nomination.

Ruth Gibson, acting Secretary

## H.A. & H.G.

President Ann Cottingham 01189 403276

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Please visit our web site: for more information on our activities on  
<http://www.henley-on-thamesarchaeologicalandhistoricalgroup.org.uk/index.php>

Edited by: Ruth Gibson

**HENLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL GROUP**  
**AGM 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015**

Nomination for ordinary Committee member

Nomination for officers ( Chair, Hon. Secretary, Treasurer)

Name:.....

Sponsor: .....

Nominated person has agreed to stand .....

Please, send/give completed form to: Membership Secretary Hilary Fisher, 50 Queen Street, RG9 1AP by 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015